

Date: January 31, 2008

NOTICE OF AVAILABILITY OF ENVIRONMENTAL DOCUMENT

California Department of Parks and Recreation

Draft Environmental Impact Report

Bidwell-Sacramento River State Park

Habitat Restoration and Outdoor Recreation Facilities Development Project

Butte County, California

Description of the Proposed Project

State Parks, with planning assistance from the Nature Conservancy (TNC), is proposing to implement the Bidwell-Sacramento River State Park Habitat Restoration and Outdoor Recreation Facilities Development Project on two parcels known as the Singh Unit and Nicolaus property along the Sacramento River within and adjacent to Bidwell-Sacramento River State Park (BSRSP or Park), west of the City of Chico in Butte County, California. The Singh Unit is owned by State Parks and located within BSRSP. The Nicolaus property is currently owned by TNC, but would be transferred to State Parks, as part of the proposed project, prior to implementation of habitat restoration activities and recreation facilities development. It is located immediately adjacent to the Indian Fisheries subunit of BSRSP. Both the Singh Unit and Nicolaus property are currently in agricultural production (walnut and/or almond orchards).

Habitat Restoration

The first project objective is to restore natural topography and vegetation on the Singh Unit and Nicolaus property. This includes the removal of two human made berms on the Singh Unit; the removal of nonnative invasive vegetation, including eucalyptus on the Singh Unit adjacent to River Road; and, restoration of the following natural communities:

- ▶ cottonwood mixed riparian forest,
- ▶ valley oak savannah,

- ▶ mixed riparian forest,
- ▶ valley oak riparian forest, and
- ▶ native grasslands.

The Singh Unit and Nicolaus property present a unique opportunity for habitat restoration because they are located at the confluence of the Sacramento River, Big Chico Creek, and Mud Creek. The protection and restoration of habitat on these two parcels would aid in the recovery of special-status species, rehabilitate natural processes along the river, protect and restore riparian habitat, and improve water quality.

Outdoor Recreation Facilities Development

The second project objective includes the transfer of ownership of the Nicolaus property from TNC to State Parks, prior to implementation of habitat restoration activities and development of outdoor recreation facilities. The inclusion of the Nicolaus property within BSRSP, and restoration of the Nicolaus property and the Singh Unit, would present an opportunity to enhance and expand the Park's recreational and public access opportunities. Therefore, the project would include the creation of new trails on both properties, aligned to connect with existing and proposed trails and facilities within the Park. It would also result in the construction of new day-use and overnight camping facilities on the Nicolaus property. The Park headquarters would be relocated to the existing farm complex on the Nicolaus property, which is on higher, less frequently flooded ground compared to the current headquarters location. By expanding outdoor recreation facilities and restoring habitat at BSRSP, this project would increase public accessibility to the middle reaches of the Sacramento River, while providing more habitat for riparian and river-dependent wildlife and plant species.

Purpose of the EIR

State Parks has prepared a Draft Environmental Impact Report (DEIR) to provide agencies and the public with information about the potential environmental effects of the project in accordance with the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) (Pub. Res.

Code Section 21000 et seq.) and the State CEQA Guidelines (14 California Code of Regulations [CCR] Section 15000 et seq.). CEQA defines a “project” as any activity directly undertaken by a public agency that “may cause either a direct physical change in the environment, or a reasonably foreseeable indirect physical change in the environment” (Pub. Res. Code Section 21065).

Tiered Project-Level EIR

CEQA permits an EIR for a project to tier off a more general EIR for a previously prepared program, plan, policy, or ordinance in instances where the later project would be consistent with the earlier program, plan, policy, or ordinance (Pub. Res. Code Section 21094 and State CEQA Guidelines Section 15152). Tiering promotes efficiency in the CEQA process by encouraging the lead agency to limit an EIR on a later project to examining the significant effects that were not examined as significant effects in the prior EIR or are susceptible to substantial reduction or avoidance by specific revisions in the project (State CEQA Guidelines Section 15152).

The DEIR for the Bidwell-Sacramento River State Park Habitat Restoration and Outdoor Recreation Facilities Development Project is a project-level document, tiered off the Bidwell-Sacramento River State Park General Plan and EIR, which consists of the following set of documents:

- ▶ Bidwell-Sacramento River State Park Preliminary General Plan and DEIR (December 2003)
- ▶ Bidwell-Sacramento River State Park Recirculated DEIR (Agricultural Resources) (October 2005)
- ▶ Bidwell-Sacramento River State Park Comments and Responses to Comments on the Recirculated DEIR (January 2006)

Potentially-Significant Impacts

The DEIR concludes that the project could result in significant or potentially significant adverse impacts on the environment in the following areas: hydrology, water quality,

and river geomorphology; biological resources; cultural resources; and air quality and climate change. Adoption of mitigation measures reduces all significant or potentially significant adverse impacts to less than significant.

Where the DEIR May Be Obtained

The DEIR and the Bidwell-Sacramento River State Park General Plan and EIR, from which this DEIR is tiered, are available for public review at the following locations:

California Department of Parks and Recreation
525 Esplanade
Chico, California 95926
(530) 895-4304

Chico Branch of the Butte County Library
1108 Sherman Avenue
Chico, California 95926

Oroville Branch of the Butte County Library
1820 Mitchell Avenue
Oroville, California 95966

Colusa County Free Library
738 Market Street
Colusa, California 95932

Princeton Branch Library
232 Prince Street
Princeton, California 95970

Tehama County Library
645 Madison Street
Red Bluff, California 96080

Scotty's Landing
12609 River Road
Chico, California

Website – The DEIR may be viewed and/or downloaded from the California State Parks Website:

<http://www.parks.ca.gov/>

Under the “Public Interest” tab, click on “CEQA Notices”

Click on “CEQA Notices for Northern California Parks”

You will then see the project's CEQA documents listed under “Butte County”

Copies of Draft EIR – Bound or CD copies of the DEIR are available by contacting:

Denise Reichenberg

Sector Superintendent

California Department of Parks and Recreation Northern Buttes District/Valley Sector

525 Esplanade

Chico, California 95926

(530) 895-4304

Public Review Period

The public review period for the DEIR begins on **January 31, 2008** and ends at 5:00 p.m. on **March 17, 2008**. Comments on the accuracy and completeness of information in the DEIR must be submitted in writing to:

Denise Reichenberg
Sector Superintendent
California Department of Parks and Recreation Northern Buttes District/Valley Sector
525 Esplanade
Chico, California 95926
(530) 895-4304

Comments may be submitted by e-mail to dreichenberg@parks.ca.gov. Comments may be faxed to the State Parks' office at (530) 895-6699, but an original must be received within a few working days of the due date. All comments received during the public review period will be made part of the public record and responded to in the Final EIR.

Public Hearing

State Parks will hold a public hearing on the DEIR on **Tuesday February 19, 2008** from **6:30 p.m. to 8:30 p.m.** at the **Bidwell Mansion SHP Visitor Center** located at 525 The Esplanade, Chico CA 95926. A presentation on the project will begin at 7:00 p.m. followed by the public hearing. It is not necessary to provide testimony during the public hearing portion of the workshop; comments on the DEIR will be accepted throughout the workshop by recording them at the public comment table. Comments may also be submitted as described above.

For further information on the project, please contact Denise Reichenberg at (530) 895-4304.